

HOARDING FORUM: A WORKABLE SOLUTION

By Kathleen Piché, L.C.S.W., Public Affairs Director



Photo courtesy of MC Harris

The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) Older Adult System of Care (OASOC), Community and Senior Services (CSS) and Adult Protective Services (APS) presented *Hoarding: A Workable Solution to Compulsive Hoarding*, a two day conference on how to explore effective interventions associated with hoarding. The eleventh annual conference was held on June 29-30 at the California Endowment. Over 300 clinical staff, providers, consumers and law enforcement packed the Yosemite room eager to understand and learn how to treat hoarding and related disorders.

Theion Perkins, R.N., LACDMH Program Head, OASOC, welcomed the packed room of attendees. Opening comments continued with Carlotta Childs-Seagle, L.C.S.W., Deputy Director, LACDMH Countywide Older Adult System of Care.

The U.S. population has a three to five percent prevalence of hoarding.



The morning session started with a thorough discussion by David F. Tolin, Ph.D., ABPP, Director of Anxiety Disorders Center, Institute of Living/Hartford Hospital., who spoke about what hoarding is (DSM 5 criteria) and treating the disorder with Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy, including ongoing education and model-building, motivational interviewing, hands-on training for organization and decision-making, gradual exposure to not acquiring and discarding and constant use of cognitive restructuring to challenge maladaptive beliefs.

Morning workshops offered various perspectives on capacity and legal issues, enforcement, implications for aging in place with a community perspective and effective treatments.



The afternoon featured keynote speaker Michael A. Tompkins, Ph.D., San Francisco Bay Area Center for Cognitive Therapy, who spoke on harm reduction.

Day two featured Cory Chalmers from Steri-Clean and Christina Narin, L.C.S.W., GENESIS/FACTS FCCS Older Adult System of Care Programs, who discussed an evidence-based best-practice approach to treatment.



Hoarding is the excessive collection and retention of things or animals until they interfere with day-to-day functions. The collection of newspapers, magazines, old clothes and other items may cause fires while animal hoarding can spread contagious diseases. Older adults represent a significant number of people who hoard.

Hoarding is both a mental health and public health problem that usually has been present for long periods of time; hasty interventions do not resolve it. Interventions without cooperation from the hoarder can have dangerous results. A careful and thorough assessment is needed for successful outcomes and interventions should include the older adult, family and other agencies such as LACDMH, APS, code enforcement, building and safety, animal control and criminal justice departments.

